

Imaam Al-Albaanee On Weak Hadeeth

Points From Shaikh Al-Albaanee's Introduction To 'Saheehut-Targheeb'

Imaam Muslim's Position: That Weak Ahaadeeth Are To Be Discarded & That Authentic Ahaadeeth Are Only To Be Narrated :-

He says in the introduction of his 'saheeh':

"To proceed, may Allaah have mercy upon you - if it were not for the evil practice that we have seen from many who take upon themselves the position of muhaddith in their leaving the obligation to discard the weak ahaadeeth and 'munkar' narration's and to suffice with only the authentic ahaadeeth - well known and transmitted by the reliable narrators, well known for their truthfulness and trustworthiness after knowing and admitting with their tongues that much of what they fling at the ignorant people is to be rejected, and is transmitted by unsatisfactory narrators whose narration's are censured by the scholars of hadeeth such as Maalik, Shu'bah, Yahyaa Ibn Sa'eed al Qattaan and others. So it has become easy for me to carry out what you ask regarding differentiating and gathering [ahaadeeth], because of what we have informed you of a people's spreading 'munkar' narration's with weak and unknown isnaads ~ and flinging them to the common people who are unaware of their weakness - then due to this - what you have asked has become easy upon my heart.

And know! May Allaah ta'alaa grant you success - that what is obligatory upon everyone who is able to distinguish because authentic and weak narration's, and between the reliable and suspect narrators is that he should not narrate therefrom except that known to be authentic and have trustworthy narrators, and that he should avoid therefrom that narrated by narrators accused of lying, or wilful innovators - and the proof that what we have said is an obligation, not something lesser than it is Allaah's saying: [al-Hujuraat:6], and His saying: [Sooratul-Baqarah:282], and He said: [Sooratut-Talaaq:2]

So the Ayaahs that we have mentioned show that the report of the Faasiq is not acceptable and that the witness of any but the trustworthy is rejected. And the narration - even if its meaning is different to that of the witness in some respects, since the report of the Faasiq is unacceptable to the scholars just as his witness is rejected by everyone, and the Sunnah shows that the munkar narration's are to be rejected - just as the Qur'aan shows that the report of the Faasiq is rejected. And it is the famous narration from Allaah's Messenger (sallallaahu alayhi wa sallam):

"He who narrates from me a saying and thinks that it is a lie then he is one of the liars. "

Aboo Bakr ibn Abee Shaibah narrated to us...

- He then quotes his isnaads from al-Mugheerah ibn Shu'bah from the Prophet (sallallaahu alayhi wa sallam). Then he quotes other marfoo' ahaadeeth and mawqoof Aathaat warning against narrating that whose authenticity is unknown. Then Imaam Muslim quotes the hadeeth of Aboo Hurairah and the saying of Imaam Maalik and 'Abdur-Rahmaan ibn Mahdee - concerning not narrating everything which one hears:

- Aboo Hurairah - radiAllaahu'anhu - reports that the Prophet (sallallaahu alayhi wa sallam) said:

"It is sufficient falsehood for a person that he narrates everything which he hears."

- Imaam Maalik said: "A man will not be safe if he narrates everything which he hears and will never be an Imaam if he quotes everything which he hears. "
- Abdur-Rahmaan ibn Mahdee said: "A man will never become an Imaam who is taken as an example until he withholds a part of what he heard." [i.e. That which is not known to be authentic – since concealing authentic knowledge is forbidden]
- Ibn al 'Arabee al-Maalikey said: "The weak hadeeth is not be acted upon at all."

Conditions For Acting Upon A Weak Hadeeth (with those who hold that it may be acted upon)

al-Haafiz as-Sakhaawee says in 'al-Qawlul-Badee'....'(p.195 Indian ed.):

"And I have heard our Shaikh [Ibn Hajr al-Asqalaanee] say many times and he wrote it for me with his own hand:

"Indeed the conditions for acting upon a weak hadeeth are three":

- i. Upon which they all agree: that it should not be very weak so that excludes that only narrated by a liar, one accused of lying or one who makes serious mistakes.
- ii. That it falls under a general proof already present – which excludes that which is invented, having no basis.
- iii. That in acting upon it the person does not think that it is something established – in order that he does not attribute to the Prophet (sallallaahu alayhi wa sallam) that which he did not say.
(He said): And the last two are from ibn 'Abdus-Salaam and his companion Ibn Daqeeq ul-'Eid. And al-'Alaee declared that there is agreement upon the first point."

Reporting Weak Ahaadeeth

Sayings such as that of Imaam Ahmad:

"When there is a matter of Halaal and Haraam we are strict with regard to the isnaads, and if it is a matter of Targheeb and Tarheeb (Encouragement and warning) we are more lenient with regard to the isnaads." [Quoted by Shaikhul-Islaam Ibn Taimiyyah in 'Majmoo' al-Fataawaa' (18/65)]

- Then this does not mean that they are quoted without isnaad and without explaining their weakness, but that they would quote it with its isnaad and then not be strict in explaining its weakness. It is not an evidence for quoting weak ahaadeeth without isnaad or without declaring their weakness if the isnaad is omitted.
- Therefore Ibn as-Salaah says: "If you want to quote a weak hadeeth without isnaad, then do not say: "Allaah's Messenger (sallallaahu alayhi wa sallam) said: so and so.." and its like – definitely stating that he said so, but say "It is reported that Allaah's Messenger (sallallaahu alayhi wa sallam) said.." or "such and such has reached us from Allaah's Messenger (sallallaahu alayhi wa sallam)" – and likewise for that whose authenticity you doubt. But 'Allaah's Messenger (sallallaahu alayhi wa sallam) said..' is only for that which you know to be saheeh. " [i.e. Its weakness must be indicated if the isnaad is not present].

- Shaikh al-Albaanee says regarding the use of "It is reported.." etc. to indicate a weak hadeeth:

"But I do not regard this to be sufficient because of the preponderance of ignorance today since the saying of a writer or a khateeb on the minbar: 'It is reported from Allaah's Messenger (sallallaahu alayhi wa sallam) that he said so and so' will hardly be understood by anyone to mean that the hadeeth is weak – rather that must be clearly stated, as stated in the saying of 'Alee – radiAllaahu'anhu – " Speak to the people with that which they understand, do you wish that Allaah and His Messenger be disbelieved." [Reported by al-Bukhaaree. (Mukhtasar al-Bukhaaree, no. 84)]."

- The same is said by Shaikh Ahmad Shaakir in 'al-Baa'ithul-Hatheeth' (p. 101).

Imaam Muslim's Position Is That It Is Sinful To Report Something From A Weak Narrator Without Making Its Weakness Clear:

He says in the introduction of his 'saheeh':

"But they made it incumbent upon themselves to reveal the weaknesses of hadeeth narrators and they fatwaa according to that – because of the great danger involved in it, since the narrations about matters of Deen convey allowance (Tahleel) and Prohibition (Tahreem), or orders and forbiddances, or encouragement and warning (targheeb wa tarheeb), so if the narrator is not truthful and trustworthy – then someone who narrates from him, knowing that, and does not make his weakness clear to others who do not know him, then he is sinful through that action, deceiving the common Muslims – since he cannot be sure that some of those who hear those narration's will not use some or all of them, and perhaps they – or most of them – are lies which have no basis. And the authentic narrations from reliable narrators and people of precision are so plentiful that there is no need of the narration of someone who is not reliable.

And I think that most of those who do what we have described with these weak ahaadeeth and unknown isnaads – and accept them after knowing their weakness – I think that they narrate that and accept it only to seek increase before the common people and so that it may be said: "What a lot of hadeeth so and so has collected and how much he has compiled!" And one who behaves in this way with regard to knowledge – and follows this course – then it is more fitting that he be called 'Jaahil' (ignorant) than that he should be described as having knowledge."

- That remaining silent about weak or fabricated ahaadeeth is a major reason for the appearance of innovations e.g. setting prisoners free on 'Aashoraa, staying awake on the middle night of Sha'baan and fasting its day etc. These and many other innovated practices find their origin in weak/fabricated ahaadeeth.

The Condition That It Must Have A Basis In The Sharee'ah.

- This is not sufficient since most of the innovations fall under something general having a basis in the sharee'ah – but even so are not prescribed – but are innovations.

Ibn Taimiyyah's Saying In That Respect And That It Is Not Permissible To Declare Anything To Be Mustahabb (Recommended, Approved) On The Basis Of A Weak Hadeeth With Regard To Targheeb And Tarheeb.

He said (Majmoo' al-Fataawaa : 18/65-68) :

"And likewise the position of the scholars regarding acting on a weak hadeeth concerning excellent actions: it does not mean that something can be declared mustahabb (recommended) on the basis of a hadeeth which is not authentic. Since the category of mustahabb is a Sharee'ah ruling and so is only established with a proof from the Sharee'ah. And anyone who declares that Allaah loves any action without a Sharee'ah proof has prescribed something as part of the Deen – which Allaah did not permit – just as if he had declared something halaal or haraam. Therefore scholars differ about what is mustahabb as they differ about other than that, rather it is a principle of the prescribed Deen.

Rather what they mean by that is that the action is something which it is established that Allaah loves or hates - by a text or ijmaa' – such as reciting the Qur'aan, tasbeeh, Du'aa, Saqadah and doing good to the people. And the hatred of lying and deception etc. So if a hadeeth is narrated about the excellence of certain actions, their reward or dislike of certain actions and their punishment – then the amount and type of punishment – if reported in a hadeeth which we do not know to be fabricated – then it is permissible to narrate and act upon it ~ meaning: that the soul hopes for that reward or fears that punishment. Like a man who knows that trade brings profit – but he is informed that it brings a very great profit – so if he acts on that it benefits him if it is true and does not harm him if it is not.

And an example of that is the use of Israa-eeleeyat (narration's from the people of the Book) and dreams, and sayings of the salaf and scholars, and things which happened to the salaf etc. in order to encourage or warn – the like of which it is not permissible to use to establish a Sharee'ah ruling, neither recommendation or other than it. But it is permissible to mention it with regard to encouragement and warning and inciting hope and fear – with regard to that which is known to be good or bad due to Sharee'ah proofs. Since that benefits and does not harm whether true or false. But that which is known to be fabricated – then it is not permissible to consider it since falsehood is of no benefit. And if something is established as being 'saheeh' then rulings are established through it, and if it is possible that it is – then it is narrated since it is possible that it is true – and since there is no harm in its narration of untrue. And Ahmad's saying: "When there comes Targheeb and Tarheeb we are lenient about the isnaads ", means: that we narrate that with isnaad – even if its narrators are not from the reliable ones who are a proof. And likewise the saying of those who say: "We act on it with regard to excellent actions" – it means doing righteous actions such as reciting Qur'aan, Dhikr and avoiding wicked actions.

And its like is in the hadeeth which al-Bukhaaree reports from 'Abdullah ibn 'Amr that he (sallallaahu alayhi wa sallam) said:

"Report from me even if only a single Aayah. And narrate from the children of Israa'eel and there is no harm. And he who lies against me deliberately then let him take his place in the fire."

Along with his (sallallaahu alayhi wa sallam) saying in the authentic hadeeth :

"If the People of the Book narrate to you then do not affirm what they say, nor declare it as untrue."

Since it is an allowance to narrate from them – along with this forbiddance of affirming or denying what they say, if there was no benefit in narrating from them at all – then he would not have allowed or ordered it. And if it were permissible to affirm what they say just because they narrate it – then he would not have forbidden to affirm it, so the souls take benefit in some places from that which they think is true.

And if the weak ahaadeeth about excellent actions contain specifications and limitations – such as Prayer in a particular time with a certain recitation, or with particular characteristics – then that is not permissible – since declaring that particular way to be recommended requires a proof from the sharee’ah...

A SUMMARY OF THE WORDS OF IBN TAIMIYYAH REGARDING ACTING ON THE WEAK HADEETH WITH REGARD TO EXCELLENT ACTIONS

Shaikh al-Albaanee says: I say: That it is all from the saying of Shaikhul-Islam Ibn Taimiyyah – rahimahullaahu ta’aalaa – and may Allaah reward him well for the Muslims – and we may summarize from it that there are two conditions for the weak hadeeth:-

- i. That it promises reward for an action which is established as being prescribed in the Sharee’ah by a Sharee’ah proof. So it is permissible to act upon this – meaning: that the soul hopes for that reward. And its example with him is the Dhikr for entering the market – on the basis that the hadeeth about it is not established with him – and you will know our opinion on that. [i.e. that that hadeeth is authentic]
- ii. That it includes an action not established by a proof from the Sharee’ah – some people thinking it to be prescribed – then it is not permissible to act on that... and he was agreed to in that by the Imaam Aboo Ishaq ash-Shaatibee in his book ‘al-I’tisaam’."

Imaam ash-Shaatibee divides such actions into 3 categories :-

- a. That which is established by a text – both the nature of the action and its specific form, such as the Five Obligatory Prayers with their differing number of rak’ahs etc., the Fast of Ramadaan, Fasting the Day of ‘Arafah, Witr Prayer, Eclipse Prayer. These are established by the text – so if we find a weak hadeeth, which is not very weak, enjoining any of these or warning against leaving them – then it may be mentioned in that way.
- b. An action which neither its nature nor its specific form have any textual support. For example: monasticism, castration for the one who fears fornication, worshipping by standing out in the hot sun or remaining silent – not speaking to anyone – then it is not correct to use anything which enjoins the like of these or anything which warns against leaving any of them since they have no basis..
- c. An action which people may think belongs to the first category since the nature of the action is something prescribed – but its specific form is not. For example Prayer on the middle night of Sha’baan, or fasting its day – since optional Prayer and optional fasting are both something prescribed and supported by text. But to particularise a day or time with any worship needs a proof itself – since it involves more than just affirming the excellence of optional Prayer or fasting – but involves declaring the excellence of that day or time, which will itself need a proof.[And most of the innovations fall into this category].